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# TIME

## J.F.K.'s ASSASSINATION: WHO WAS THE REAL TARGET?

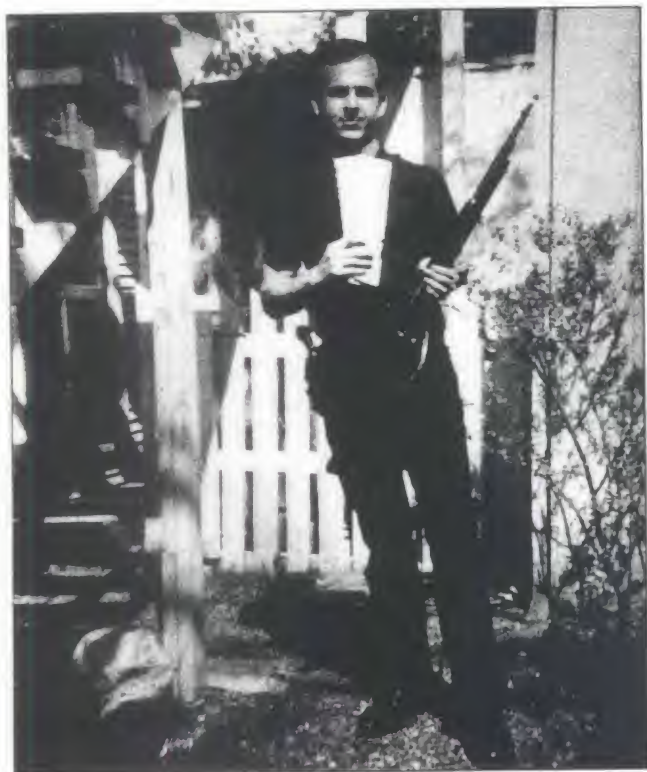


**Twenty-five years later, a new book argues  
Oswald was actually out to get John Connally**



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Excerpts from a forthcoming book suggest that Lee Harvey Oswald, angry at the downgrading of his Marine discharge, was out to get the Governor of Texas, not J.F.K. ► Twenty-five years after the assassination, the trendy conspiracy theory is that the Mafia used Oswald to stop the Kennedy brothers' war on crime. ► Hugh Sidey recalls the shattering day that started with cheers and ended in mourning.



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► Nine sub-Cabinet jobs that will make a real difference on trade, foreign policy and the environment. ► Louisiana's Bennett Johnston, a leading contender for Senate majority leader, says Bush's economic plan is "absolute nonsense."



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In Estonia, advocates of increased local autonomy risk a collision with Moscow over the limits of mutual sovereignty. In Armenia, anger continues to rise over the status of the ethnic minority in Azerbaijan. ► Benazir Bhutto wins the vote, but will she get to govern Pakistan? ► P.L.O. Chairman Yasser Arafat declares a Palestinian state in the West Bank.



● COVER STORIES

# Was Connally the Real Target?

*Yes, says a forthcoming book, because Oswald blamed the Texan for stripping him of the only thing he ever really valued*

BY JAMES RESTON JR.

On the 25th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, fascination remains intense with the many loose ends of the mystery. New theories about the crime are regularly proposed, and old ones gain new adherents. Was just one person responsible for the murder? Or was a wider conspiracy involved? And if so, who was behind it, and what was the motive? What follows is an excerpt from a forthcoming book about John B. Connally suggesting that Lee Harvey Oswald was not gunning for J.F.K. but for the Governor of Texas.



MARINA OSWALD'S PHOTO OF HER "HUNTER FOR FASCISTS"

## THE ASSASSIN

Through his campaign in the fall of 1962, with his victory and his accession to the governorship in January 1963, and with his first bold speeches as the chief executive of Texas, John Connally epitomized the big man of Texas. He was a taunting, polarizing figure, engendering strong feelings of love and hate, of intense loyalty and passionate contempt.

Not long after Connally returned to Texas for his political race, another Texan, who was his very antithesis, also returned. By contrast, Lee Harvey Oswald was a small, wiry, homely loner, 22 years of age. Like Connally, he considered Fort Worth to be his home, and he had left his hometown with a splash. In November 1959 the departure was big news, every bit as big as would be the news a year later that President Kennedy had appointed Fort Worth oilman John Connally as Secretary of the

Navy. The former was a case of treason, however: FORT WORTH DEFECTOR CONFIRMS RED BELIEFS.

Oswald had dropped out of high school after his freshman year to join the Marine Corps. His three-year hitch in the corps included electronics and radar training and concluded with a tour in Atsugi, Japan, at a base from which U-2 aircraft took off for Russia. The Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* reported in 1959 that the turncoat had read *Das Kapital* as he defended freedom in Japan, had saved all his money—\$1,600—to travel to the So-

viet Union, and had thought of nothing besides defection.

Once on Soviet soil, Oswald told his Intourist agent, a stolid woman named Rimma, that he wished to apply for Soviet citizenship. Rimma helped him with his letter to the Supreme Soviet. A few days later on Oct. 21, 1959, Oswald wrote in his diary:

"Meeting with single official. Balding, stout, black suit, fairly good English, asks what do I want. I say Sovite citizenship. He tells me 'USSR only great in literature and wants me to go back home.' I am stunned.

"Eve. 6:00. Recive word from police official. I must leave country tonight at 8 P.M. as visa expires. I am shocked! I have \$100 left. I have waited for 2 year to be accepted. My fondes dreams are shattered because of a petty offial.

"7:00 P.M. I decide to end it. Soak wrist in cold water to numb the pain. Then slash my left wrist. Than plaung wrist into



bath tub of hot water. I think 'when Rimma comes at 8 to find me dead, it will be a great shock.' Somewhere a violin plays, as I watch my life whirl away. I think to myself, 'how easy to die' and 'a sweet death' (to violins)

"about 8:00. Rimma finds my unconscious (bathtub water a rich, red color) She screams. [Later] I tell her to go home (my mood is bad) but she stays. She is my friend. She has a strong will. Only at this moment, I notice she is pretty."

Upon his release from the hospital, Oswald again confronted the daunting face of Soviet bureaucracy. His passport did not seem to be enough for them, so Oswald presented them with his most prized possession, a laminated card that displayed his honorable discharge from the Marine Corps. Lee Harvey Oswald defined himself through his Marine Corps service. The corps had shaped him. It proved his importance. Later, it would provide him with his animus toward John Connally.

He slipped out of the hotel and took a cab to the American embassy. There he presented himself petulantly to a wry and experienced professional named Richard Snyder. Oswald demanded the right to renounce his American citizenship. Snyder asked him why he was doing it. "I am a Marxist!" Oswald replied. "Well, then," said Snyder, "you're going to be very lonesome in the Soviet Union."

Oswald would not be deterred. Finally Snyder seized the bureaucrat's final retreat: the embassy was technically closed that afternoon, and the applicant would have to come back in a few days. Oswald stormed out.

Oswald's attempt to renounce his citizenship had been meant to impress the Soviets, and it apparently worked. It remains one of history's ironies that had the American consul not been so sensitive about the perils of precipitous, emotional renunciation, Oswald would never have been permitted to re-enter the U.S.

In his interview with Snyder, Oswald had made one threat that could not be ignored. He promised to turn over all the military secrets he

had learned in the Marines to the Soviets. As a radar operator with a secret clearance, he had access to the radio frequencies of all squadrons, the relative strength of squadrons, the number and type of aircraft in each, the authentication code for entering and exiting the Air Defense Identification Zone, and the range of Marine radar and radio. As a result of this threat, never carried through, codes, aircraft call signs, radio and radar frequencies in the range of Oswald's knowledge were changed.

As Oswald moped around the Metropol Hotel, his sole link to America and to his past was his older brother Robert. Robert Oswald had reached Lee by telegram in early November, calling the decision to defect a mistake. On Nov. 26 Lee replied angrily in a long letter. "In the event of war I would kill *any* American who put on a uniform in defense of the American Government—any American. My mother and you are *not* objects of affection, but only examples of workers in the U.S. In truth, I feel I am at least with my own people."

Permitted to remain in the Soviet Union, Oswald receded into the proletariat. The KGB took no interest in him. He was considered "not very bright," and the authorities were requested to keep an occasional eye on this eccentric, lest he turn out to be some sort of "sleeping agent." As a checker of metal work in a radio factory in Minsk, he found the work easy. He was assigned

an apartment with a view overlooking the Svisloch River, and he raked in 1,400 rubles a month, twice the salary of workers on his level. Seven hundred rubles of this was a supplement from a mysterious branch of the Red Cross.

But with the approach of his first, undramatic Russian winter, Oswald developed a melancholy and then a dread of the cold and the darkness. He began to resent the compulsory attendance at the boring factory meetings. He was horrified at the poor quality and the cost of necessities like clothes and shoes. The dreary routine of the worker's life began to undercut his operatic dream.

The turning point for Oswald was not political but emotional. He had had a few "light affairs" with Russian girls. In early January he fell in love with a comrade at the factory named Ella, but after a dalliance she spurned him. To his diary, he declared that he was "miserable," and a few weeks later he wrote, "I am starting to reconsider my desire about staying. The work is drab. The money I get has no where to be spent. No nightclubs or bowling alleys. I have had enough." So much for the fervor of his commitment. It had foundered on the absence of a bowling alley.

At a "boring" trade-union dance in March he met Marina, a stubborn, blond pharmacist with a French hairdo. Where Ella had snickered at the awkwardness of his marriage proposal, Marina did not make him "miserable." In April they were married, and in his diary he declared, "In spite of fact I married Marina to hurt Ella, I found myself in love with Marina."

In July 1961 the Oswalds applied for an exit visa and hoped to return to America. His "Red Cross" allotment of 700 rubles a month stopped. He had never told anyone of his supplement, for he had known for some time that it came from the secret police.

### CRUSHING BLOW

In January 1962 Oswald was attempting to control his excitement over the imminence of the birth of his first child and the prospect of returning to the U.S. Two weeks later, the blow struck. He received a letter from his mother Marguerite: the Marine Corps, had changed his discharge from

honorable to dishonorable. In fact, the downgrading had actually stopped one notch short of "dishonorable," at "undesirable," but anything less than an honorable military discharge is a curse in America, especially for a working man. The action had been prompted by Oswald's request for Soviet citizenship, the "dishonor" that this had brought on the Marine Corps, and by Oswald's threat to turn over military secrets to the Soviets.

Lee Harvey Oswald was crushed at the news. His military service gave meaning to his life, and it was the *only* thing that did. Despite two courts-martial (for possessing an illegal weapon and for fighting), despite proclaiming himself to be a Marxist and gaining the barracks nickname of "Oswaldskovich," he had made it through. His reward was an honorable discharge.

On Jan. 31, 1962, Oswald wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, a man whose name was, he thought, John Connally. He wished to call the Secretary's attention to a case "about which you may have personal knowledge since you are a resident of Fort Worth as am I." The Fort Worth papers, he wrote, had blown his case into "another turncoat sensation" when, in fact, he had come to Russia to reside "for a short time, much in the same way E. Hemingway resided in Paris."

"I have and always had the full sanction of the U.S. Embassy, Moscow, USSR," he lied, and when he returned to the U.S., "I



JACKIE WAS THE JEWEL ON THE MORNING OF THE TRAGIC DAY



## The Assassination

shall employ all means to right this gross mistake or injustice to a boni-fied U.S. citizen and ex-serviceman." He asked Connally to "repair the damage done to me and my family."

Connally had resigned as Secretary of the Navy six weeks earlier. What the ex-serviceman got from the ex-Navy Secretary a month later was a stale promise to pass the problem on to his successor. Oswald had been spurned by a fellow Texan, and he resented it. He embroidered it into a personal antipathy. Connally came to take on enormous symbolic significance in Oswald's mind. Connally was the U.S. Government, and its unfair action fortified his bitterness against the U.S., and a man named Connally would become the repository of that bitterness.

Finally, in late May 1962, the Oswalds got out of Russia. They arrived in Fort Worth only a few weeks before Connally won the Democratic primary for the gubernatorial nomination. They had no money and a six-month-old baby. The husband had no qualifications for employment. Worse than that. The Fort Worth paper had reported the return of the turncoat.

The wife spoke no English, and her husband seemed determined to keep it that way. Their isolation and hopelessness might have been worse but for the small Russian émigré community in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, about 50 people who had gravitated to Texas mainly after World War II. They were anti-Communist.

The community had a titular leader, a kind and energetic gentleman in his late 50s named George Bouhe, who had fled Russia in 1923. Bouhe took an interest in the Oswalds and helped them get settled by providing them with a little cash here and there, \$10 or \$20. For his pains, he got only insults from Oswald. Bouhe persisted, mainly because Marina seemed to him a "lost soul." To Bouhe, Oswald was a simpleton and a boor and, soon enough, a wife abuser.

Lying about his Marine record worked at first. A month after his arrival, Oswald got his first job, at a Fort Worth welding company as a sheet-metal worker; on his application, he cited sheet-metal work in the Marine Corps as a qualification.

But Oswald was terrified of being found out. Bouhe had experienced Oswald's fixation with his military discharge and had seen how his lying about it launched him into a state of high anxiety. After the assassination, knowing that Oswald was tormented by the bad discharge at the very time when Connally was about to be promoted to the pinnacle of Texas government, Bouhe put the pieces together for the Warren Commission. "If anybody asked me, did Oswald have any hostility toward anybody in government, I would say Governor Connally."

The notion of Connally as the emotional spark for the assassination is strengthened by the testimony of others in the émigré community. In early October 1962, Oswald quit his job because he hated welding. Marina and the baby took up residence in the home of Alexandra De Mohrenschildt, the daughter of another Russian émigré in Dallas, a flamboyant loudmouth named George De Mohrenschildt, who toyed with Oswald in uneven intellectual games. A year and a half later, Alexandra De Mohrenschildt came before the Warren Commission to talk about her acquaintance with Oswald.

"Was President Kennedy ever mentioned?" counsel asked. "Never, never," Alexandra replied. "It was the Governor of Texas who was mentioned mostly. For some reason, Lee just didn't like him. I don't know why, but he didn't like him."

Did Connally come up in connection with something about Lee's discharge from the Marines? counsel prodded.

"Maybe it was the dishonorable discharge. All I know is that it was something he didn't talk about. And there was a reason why he did not like Connally, but he never ever said a word about Kennedy."

In October Oswald applied for a job in the photography department of a printing concern in Dallas called Jaggars-Chiles-Stovall. The subject of his military career came up. "The Marines," Oswald said brashly. "Oh, yes—yes," the employer said. "Honorably discharged, of course?" "Oh, yes," Oswald replied with technical truthfulness. Oswald was once again seized with rage. Was this going to come up every time? His anxiety that his lies might be found out was intense.

Oswald used the Jaggars facilities after hours to forge a new Marine Corps discharge and draft a classification document in the name of Aleck James Hidell, the name under which he ordered his first weapon, a

Smith & Wesson pistol, by mail, and his second, a high-powered Italian Mannlicher Carcano rifle.

In early April, six months after arriving at Jaggars, Oswald brought his dismissal upon himself by flaunting a Soviet publication at work. He could say that he was fired for political reasons rather than for his own shortcomings, including inefficiency and quarreling with employees.

### TAKING AIM

Three days into his first week of unemployment, April 10, Oswald made an attempt on the life of former General Edwin Walker, an ultraconservative and a onetime candidate for

Governor of Texas against John Connally. Oswald missed Walker's head by about an inch. In choosing Walker as a target, Oswald's murderous instinct was turning upon the figure of the pure right. His frustration had now taken its full form of violence. Coiled spring that he was, it was a question of what event, what figure, what farfetched fantasy might set him off.

Only one person knew about the attempt on General Walker and how dangerous Oswald had become: Marina Oswald. When her husband confided his awful secret to her, she understood his capability to kill for political reasons and was horrified. She, above anyone else, appreciated his murderous instinct.

On Sunday, April 21, the headline in the *Dallas Morning News* read NIXON CALLS FOR DECISION TO FORCE REDS OUT OF CUBA. It reported a lashing speech that former Vice President Richard Nixon had made in Washington excoriating Kennedy for being "defensive" of Fidel Castro. Oswald withdrew into an adjacent room. When he re-emerged, he was dressed in a tie and white shirt. His pistol was shoved into his best gray pants.

"Where are you going?" Marina demanded, sensing danger.

"Nixon is coming to town. I want to go have a look."

"I know what your 'looks' mean," she said. She pleaded with him not to go and at last he agreed. Actually, Nixon was not in town at all and Oswald knew it. He had said "Nixon" because it



FROM BEHIND, THE TARGET COULD HAVE BEEN KENNEDY OR CONNALLY



was Nixon's picture that was on the front page of the paper. It was *John Connally* who was coming. He was scheduled to open a conference of space scientists in Dallas.

General Walker, Richard Nixon and John Connally melded into one amorphous, maddening profile for Oswald. The sentiments they expressed were the very ones that Oswald despised. They were interchangeable parts of the radical right. During this time Marina Oswald had taken a picture of Oswald with his revolver on his hip and his rifle held skyward in his right arm. Turning her fear into mockery, her best tool to control him, Marina had scrawled across the picture "Hunter for fascists . . . Ha . . . ha . . . ha." It was the laughter of terror and despair.

Marina Oswald was to say that her husband had never uttered a harsh or angry word against Kennedy; if he had any negative emotion, it was envy. In the year before the assassination, Oswald avidly read William Manchester's biography of Kennedy, *Portrait of a President*, and Kennedy's own book, *Profiles in Courage*. He had become fascinated by the lives of great men, for in his mind he was one himself. Once to Marina he predicted that he would be "prime minister" of America in 20 years. He told Marina that J.F.K. deserved to be President.

After the assassination, George De Mohrenschildt, who despised Oswald, was the best witness on the question of what moved—and did not move—Oswald. De Mohrenschildt was overcome with guilt for his trifling with Oswald, and in 1977 he committed suicide after proclaiming that he was a moral conspirator in the assassination of Kennedy.

In 1978 the House Select Committee on Assassinations discovered a manuscript De Mohrenschildt had been writing to work out his metaphysical responsibility before he took his life. "Lee actually admired President Kennedy in his own reserved way," the memoir said. "One day we discussed Kennedy's efforts to bring peace to the world and to end the cold war. 'Great! Great!' exclaimed Lee. 'If he succeeds, he'll be the greatest President in the history of this country.'" As he spoke of these warm sentiments toward

Kennedy, he spoke equally of Oswald's torment over his military-discharge downgrade. It explained Oswald's "hatred of John Connally."

Marina Oswald, in the first of her three appearances before the Warren Commission, regretfully acknowledged that she accepted her husband as the President's murderer. Why had he done it? Her husband wanted to become a memorable figure of history. In her second appearance, in June 1964, she remembered the "Nixon incident." Her third appearance took place in Dallas only three weeks before the Warren Commission Report was released, and so its conclusions were already set in stone. Then she said out of thin air, "I feel in my own mind that Lee did not have President Kennedy as a prime target when he assassinated him."

"Well, who was it?" she was asked.

"I think it was Connally," she replied. "That's my personal opinion—that he perhaps was shooting at Governor Connally,

the Governor of Texas. I feel that the reason that he had Connally in his mind was on account of his discharge from the Marines and various letters they exchanged between the Marine Corps and the Governor's office, but actually, I didn't think that he had any idea concerning President Kennedy."

In 1978, testifying before the House Assassinations Committee, Marina told of how Connally's brush-off letter in February 1962, the origin of the grudge, had arrived at their Minsk apartment in a big white envelope. On the front was the smiling face of John Connally, advertising his candidacy for Governor of Texas.

On Sept. 24 or 25, while Oswald was seeking a job in New Orleans, he departed for Mexico City. He was going to contact the Russians through the Cubans to let the Soviets know that his delicate balance between America and Russia had tipped back in their favor. He wanted to explore the possibility of returning to Russia. But in Mexico City the Cuban and Soviet embassies

crushed his romantic dream of a heroic return. Oswald's trip to Mexico was such a blow that it cancels any possibility that in two months' time he would pick up his Mannlicher Carcano rifle with the motive to promote the Cuban or Soviet cause.

Oswald's problems were more mundane than that. Since August he had ceased to search for employment. It was just too hard and too embarrassing. That he had been arrested in New Orleans for distributing pamphlets for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee made him even less likely to be employed. Still, the one constant thorn with which he was preoccupied was the outrage of his downgraded discharge. If only that could be corrected as it should be, things might be different.

The Warren Commission was to receive persuasive testimony that on his way to Mexico City, Oswald stopped for an afternoon in Austin. He went to see Governor Connally. This time Oswald got the brush-off orally. He was told that the Governor did not handle military matters. Oswald went off to the bus station and on to Mexico City, clutching his military records to show to the Cubans and

the Russians. He was unprepared, as always, for their indifference.

#### A CHAT WITH JACK RUBY

In Dallas on Oct. 4, a Dallas man named Carroll Jarnagin was celebrating his birthday. Jarnagin, a divorcee and a 37-year-old lawyer with moderately liberal political views who had twice run unsuccessfully for the state legislature, was with an "exotic dancer" whose stage name was Robin Hood and who had appeared en déshabillé at such lively spots in Dallas as the Carousel Club. Robin Hood proposed that they stop by the Carousel Club because she wanted to talk to the owner, a beefy man named Jack Rubenstein, also known as Jack Ruby, about returning to his stage. They arrived at the Carousel around 10 p.m. Jarnagin was mellow but by no means insensate, and the couple took a table not far from the ticket booth at the head of the stairs.

Not long after they were settled, Jarnagin noticed a diminutive



MARINE "OSWALDSKOVICH," RIGHT, IN THE PHILIPPINES (1958)



## The Assassination

tive, wiry man in his 20s at the ticket booth who was demanding to see Ruby. The bouncer appeared and directed the arrival to the owner. Ruby and his visitor took the table next to them and, as Jarnagin later carefully reconstructed from memory and subsequently was to tell the FBI, the following conversation ensued.

"What are you doing here?" Ruby asked.

"Don't call me by my name," the visitor said testily.

"What name are you using?"

"H.L. Lee."

"What do you want?"

"I need some money. I just got in from New Orleans. I need a place to stay, and a job."

"I noticed you hadn't been around in two or three weeks," Ruby said. "You have a family, don't you? Can't you stay with them?"

"They're in Irving, and they don't know I'm back. I want to get a place to myself."

"You'll get the money after the job is done," said Ruby.

"What about half now, and half after the job is done?" Lee said.

"No. But don't worry. I'll have the money for you after the job is done."

"How much?"

"We've already agreed on that," Ruby said, and then leaned forward to whisper something that Jarnagin did not hear.

"How do I know that you can do the job?" Ruby asked.

"It's simple. I'm a Marine sharpshooter."

"Are you sure that you can do the job without hitting anybody but the Governor?"

"I'm sure. I've got the equipment ready."

"Have you tested it? Will you need to practice any?"

"Don't worry about that. I don't need any practice. When will the Governor be here?"

"Oh, he'll be here plenty of times during campaigns," Ruby replied.

"Where can I do the job?" Lee asked.

"From the roof of some building."

"No, that's too risky. Too many people around."

"But they'll be watching the parade. They won't notice you."

"Afterwards they would tear me to pieces before I could get away."

And then Oswald said, "How about giving me half of the money just before the job is done, and then you can send me the other half later?"

"I can't turn the money loose until the job is done. If there's a slipup and you don't get him, they'll pick the money up immediately. I couldn't tell them I gave half of it to you in advance. They'd think I double-crossed them. I would have to return all of the money. You'll just have to trust me. Remember, they want the job done just as bad as you want the money."

"Not that it makes any difference, but what have you got against the Governor?" Lee asked.

"He won't work with us on paroles. With a few of the right boys out, we could really open up this state, with a little cooperation from the Governor. The boys in Chicago have no place to operate. They've clamped the lid down in Chicago. Cuba is closed. Everything is dead. Look at this place—half empty. If we can open up this state, we could pack this place every night. Remember, we're right next to Mexico. There'd be money for ev-

erybody, if we can open up this state."

"How do you know that the Governor won't work with you?"

"It's no use. He's been in Washington too long. They're too straight up there. After they've been there awhile they get to thinking like the Attorney General. The Attorney General. Now there's a guy the boys would like to get, but it's no use. He stays in Washington too much."

"A rifle shoots as far in Washington as it does here, doesn't it?" Lee said.

"Forget it. That would bring the heat on everywhere, and the feds would get into everything."

"Killing the Governor of Texas will put the heat on too, won't it?"

"Not really, they'll think some crackpot or Communist did it, and it will be written off as an unsolved crime."

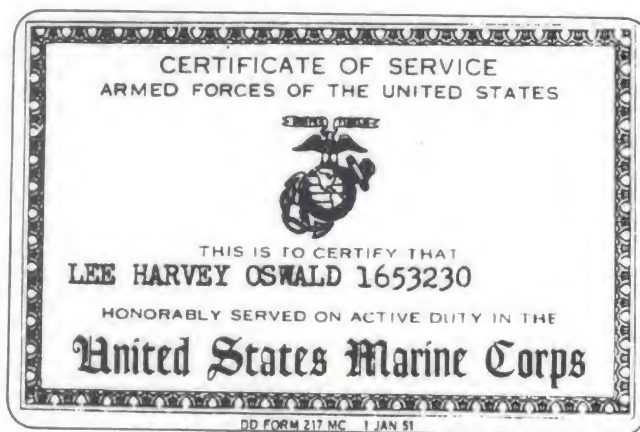
There was a distraction, and Jarnagin missed some interchanges. Then he heard Lee say, "There's really only one building to do it from, the one that covers Main, Elm and Commerce."

"Which one is that?" Ruby asked.

"The schoolbook building, close to the triple underpass."

The following day, Oct. 5, Jarnagin called the Texas Department of Public Safety and related the conversation. He requested that the Governor be informed, and he felt his report to the authorities had ended his civic duty.

After the assassination, Jarnagin recognized Oswald in the newspaper as the "Lee" at Ruby's table. He sat down, carefully reconstructed the conversation and mailed it special delivery to J. Edgar Hoover at the FBI. Thereafter, he was interviewed by more than 18 investigators. He never altered his story, nor had he recanted it 25 years later.



THE LAMINATED CARD THAT MEANT EVERYTHING TO THE KILLER

### THE THREE FURIES

The origin of President John F. Kennedy's trip to Texas in November 1963 is a subject that has passed through the prism of shame and collective guilt and emerged as a blur of garish, undefined color. With its terrible results, it appears that nobody wanted it. J.F.K. was irritated to have to make the trip. John Connally had stalled it and argued against it, and when he could no longer resist it, tried to drop Dallas from the itinerary. It was laid on without Lyndon Johnson's counsel, and when the Vice President heard about the final arrangements he resented them.

Even the purpose of the trip remains in dispute. Was Kennedy going to raise money for his 1964 campaign? Was he going to heal a rift between the factions of the Texas Democratic Party represented by liberal Senator Ralph Yarborough and Connally? Did Lyndon Johnson need the presidential trip to ensure that he would remain on the ticket the next year? The survivors of Elm Street agree on one thing: no one was to blame. And no one is to blame, for no one wanted the death of a President.

San Antonio, Houston and Austin looked fine to White House advanceman Jerry Bruno, but with Dallas and Fort Worth there were problems. Three decisions had to be made, and had they been made differently they would have changed the course of history. They are the Three Furies of Dallas.

The first had to do with an honorary degree being conferred on Kennedy at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. Ken-



nedy was pleased, since a degree from a Protestant university would further bury the fears over a Catholic President. After the midmorning degree ceremony, the President would motor 30 miles to Dallas for his speech to Dallas businessmen. It was unlikely that there would be time for a motorcade through downtown Dallas, or if there was, it would follow a different route to the luncheon site from the one eventually chosen.

Bruno got a call from Connally. He was sorry, but T.C.U. had decided against conferring the degree. The faculty senate and the student senate would have to approve the degree, and there was not enough time. What was the real reason? "Well, he's a Catholic, you know," Connally told Bruno.

There was no reason to go to Fort Worth now. But Connally called back and announced that the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce would like to give the President a breakfast. There were now two hours in the morning with nothing to do. It was decided that Kennedy would fly from Fort Worth to Dallas. All the motion to and from airports would consume time. From the Dallas airport to the luncheon, the motorcade route was redrawn—and lengthened—through Dealey Plaza.

The second Fury watched over the motorcade itself. Connally opposed it vigorously. If he did not want to advance the cause of Kennedy liberalism in Texas, neither did he want the President to flop. Kennedy should be rested. A motorcade, Connally knew, was hard work. The Governor also feared an embarrassment in Dallas. The motorcade was an invitation.

The liberals and the White House felt that if the President was speaking at Connally's exclusive businessmen's lunch, his exposure to Yarborough's people must be in the streets. Moreover, Kennedy attributed part of his success against Richard Nixon in 1960 to his mingling with the people by means of a motorcade. On this point, the liberals "won."

The last Fury presided over the site for Kennedy's luncheon speech in Dallas. Connally wanted the Trade Mart, a commercial complex just off Stemmons Freeway, where the hall was about the right size for the audience. The alternative was the Women's Building at the State Fairgrounds. The Secret Service and the White House preferred it. The Women's Building had a hall large enough to accommodate a feast for more than 4,000, and this was more in the Kennedy and Yarborough populist style.

The Secret Service liked the Women's Building for other reasons. The route of the motorcade would be more direct, continuing straight down Main Street, picking up speed as it entered Dealey Plaza and zipping through the small park at 40 to 50 m.p.h., one full block away from a building known as the Texas School Book Depository. If the Trade Mart was the spot, the motorcade would have to slow nearly to a stop to make a right turn onto Houston Street, and then a left turn at the next street, Elm, at the corner dominated by the Book Depository building. It was the deceleration to a crawling speed that concerned the Secret Service.

On Nov. 15, Bruno made this entry in his diary: "The White

House announced that the Trade Mart had been approved. I met with [Kenneth] O'Donnell and [Bill] Moyers who said that Connally was unbearable and on the verge of canceling the trip. They decided they had to let the Governor have his way." Connally had "won."

## PREMONITIONS

On the surface, the stop in San Antonio was routine in its warmth, its dignity, its tumultuousness. With her fragile beauty and her poignancy, Jackie Kennedy was the instant star. She glided ethereally alongside her husband through the receiving line. From a distance, Texas Congressman Henry Gonzalez watched as Kennedy strode to the fence to work the crowd. To his companion he said, in the first of the premonitions, how easy it would be—how easy.

The jewel of Jackie Kennedy was the object of everyone's fascination as the morning of Nov. 22 broke. She alone was making a success out of apparent failure. Without her, the bickerings of the politicians would have been even more glaring and distasteful.

On the eighth floor of the Texas hotel in Fort Worth, the President had an early meeting with Lawrence O'Brien. Kennedy sat by the window, his feet propped up on the radiator, as he looked out upon the parking lot where he would soon speak.

"Just look at that platform," he said, gazing down at the naked structure in the middle of the parking lot. "With all these buildings around it, the Secret Service couldn't stop someone who really wanted to get you."

In Dallas the assassin left for work at about the time his victim was considering a rifleman's angle from his hotel room to the parking lot in Fort Worth. Oswald wrapped his weapon in brown paper, and when his fellow worker picked him up and Oswald put the hideous package in the back seat, he mumbled

something about curtain rods. Oswald had undoubtedly seen Wednesday's paper with the parade route and the news that the President and the Governor would be riding in the second car.

The Kennedys arrived back in their hotel suite after breakfast for what might have been their last few minutes of privacy. Kenneth O'Donnell came in. He had been shown an ad in the *Dallas Morning News* with a funereal black border, a sarcastic heading of welcome to the President, sponsorship by H.L. Hunt and Dallas John Birchers, and imprecations that Kennedy was secretly in league with American Communists. The President handed it to his wife. "Can you imagine a newspaper doing that?" he said in disbelief. "We're headed into nut country now."

He was overcome again with dread and premonition. "Last night would have been a hell of a time to assassinate a President," he said, gazing out the window. "If anyone wants to shoot a President, it's not a very difficult job. All one has to do is get on a high building and a telescopic rifle, and there is nothing anybody can do."

At about the time of this interchange, Oswald took a break from filling orders at the Book Depository in Dallas, where he had been employed since Oct. 15. He too was gazing out a window at the crowd beginning to mill about in Dealey Plaza. Os-



THE ACT THAT INTENSIFIED THE MYSTERY

BOB JACKSON—DALLAS TIMES HERALD



## The Assassination

wald asked a fellow worker with forced naiveté what all the commotion was about, and his comrade told him. Which way were the President and the Governor coming? Oswald asked. Along Houston Street to Elm. "Oh, I see," he said.

As the motorcade entered downtown, the crowds grew to be throngs, and when it turned onto Main Street, pointing down the canyon of sparkling glass and steel and granite, the throngs became a multitude. Connally had never seen anything like it, a quarter-million people packed into a space of a few city blocks. On the edge of Dealey Plaza, the car slowed nearly to a stop to make its right turn. By the courthouse, Nellie Connally turned to the President in a tone resonating with her excitement. "Well, Mr. President, you can't say that Dallas doesn't love you!" she said.

"No, you certainly can't," Kennedy replied, with a smile.

### "OH, NO, NO, NO!"

In the shadow of the Book Depository, at the cross hairs of Elm and Houston, the car made its slow left turn and started down the slope into the abyss. As they edged past a tree, approaching the freeway sign, Connally's mind thrust ahead to the luncheon, only five minutes and an eternity away.

At the crack of the rifle, he knew instantly what it was. His head turned sharply to the right, but he could not swivel his body that way because of the car's bulkhead, so he swung back swiftly the other way, and then he felt the hammer strike his back. As his swivel continued, he saw that his lap was spattered with his gore. He was hit—badly—fatally, he supposed. His head tilted skyward. "Oh, no! no! no!" he screamed, as he crushed a bouquet of roses. "My God! They're going to kill us all!"

Two, three men were out there, shooting with an automatic weapon, he thought. Nellie's glance riveted on him as she heard him scream. She reached out in horror, pulling him down into her lap. The President was hit too, she sensed, but he uttered no sound, and he still sat strangely upright, a more distinct target now. He had upon his face, as his widow would later say, a "quizzical look," as if he suffered from a "slight headache."

Another shot landed as if in a water-filled balloon, spraying them with the fine mist of the President's intelligence. Connally knew what this was. Upon his trouser leg he saw a piece of blue brain, the size of his thumb.

Nellie held her husband. She now was the only remaining stationary target. The car jerked as the driver instinctively hit the brake, contradicting his training. "Get out of line," Connally heard the agent-in-charge shout. "Get us to a hospital quick!" He did not hear Jacqueline cry out with her love for her husband or hear her scramble over the backseat. He heard only Nellie's comfort. "Be still now," she was saying. "Don't worry, you're going to be all right." She kept saying it over and over, beyond the point under the freeway where he lost consciousness.

"The only thing I could think to do was to pull him out of the line of fire," she was to say. "Maybe then they wouldn't hurt him

any more. We must have been a horrible sight flying down that freeway with those dying men in our arms and going no telling where. John said nothing. Once, I saw one little moment when (I thought) maybe he was still alive, and I kept whispering to him, 'Be still. It's going to be all right.' " But she did not believe it. She thought he was dead.

At Parkland Memorial Hospital, Connally's pallor was ashen, due to loss of blood and to his difficulty in breathing, but his pulse was steady and his blood volume was adequate. His wounds were terrible. On his right shoulder, in his back there was a regular, 3-cm perforation. At an angle of 30° downward, below the right nipple, there was a ragged 5-cm wound—"a hole in his chest you could pack a baseball into," said the surgeon who treated him, James ("Red") Duke. This was a "sucking wound," which Dr. Duke closed with his hand, and it, along with the possibility that the bullet had passed through the heart and the great vessels, represented the danger to Connally's life.

Here, he enjoyed his first piece of luck. When Nellie had pulled him into her lap and held him, his arm had fallen across his chest and had pressed against the wound, partially holding in his air and permitting him to suck air in. The ride to the hospital had taken eight minutes. If it had taken eight more, he would have been dead.

At 1:35 p.m., almost exactly an hour after the monumental insult to his body, Connally went into surgery. He had, of course, no comprehension of what was transpiring on the floor below: a priest performing the last rites, a coroner standing upon the rules and threatening to block the removal of the President's body, nurses insisting on the signing of endless forms, an oak casket too heavy to be lifted by ordinary men, and a blood-caked widow, frightened as a rabbit.

His closest friend, Lyndon Johnson, was seized with terror, thinking the assassination was the precursor to a Soviet nuclear attack. For the drive from the hospital to Love Field, Johnson commandeered a police cruiser. He lay

down on the floorboards in the back and ordered an officer to lie on top of him.

Twenty minutes into Connally's operation, the doctor told his aide, Bill Stinson, that the bullet had missed the great vessels and the Governor would live. Stinson left and found Nellie, disconsolate and weeping, in the hallway.

"He'll make it," he said, and she collapsed on his shoulder. "Thank God."

On Sunday, Connally's first full day of consciousness, Oswald was shot and brought to Parkland. Ironically, Stinson took charge of the emergency room as Oswald was brought in, and secured it with state patrolmen. Stinson watched as they worked to keep the wretched killer alive. Oswald had only a small perforation in his belly, but the eyes in his misshapen, sallow face never flickered open. Stinson watched, hoping for a deathbed confession, but it never came.

What had been let loose in America? No one was sure. ■



AT ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE, THE TRIP NO ONE WANTED ENDS





PAUL SCHUTZER—LIFE

# Did the Mob Kill J.F.K.?

*Other theories persist, but several new books say the President and his brother angered the underworld, prompting vengeance*

BY ED MAGNUSON

**S**ome portentous voices out of the underworld a quarter-century ago:

*"Kennedy's not going to make it to the [1964] election—he's going to be hit."*

—Santo Trafficante, the top Florida mobster, to an FBI informer in August 1962.

*"You know what they say in Sicily: if you want to kill a dog, you don't cut off the tail, you cut off the head."*

—Carlos Marcello, Mafia boss in New Orleans, to an acquaintance that same month, explaining why President John Kennedy, not Attorney General Robert Kennedy, would be killed.

*"There is a price on the President's head. Somebody will kill Kennedy when he comes down South."*

—Bernard Tregle, a New Orleans restaurant owner allegedly associated with Marcello, within hearing of one of his employees in April 1963.

Out of the mouths of such sinister characters the assassination-conspiracy theorists of the 1980s have fashioned the latest in a long-running series of explanations of what may forever remain unexplainable: why Lee Harvey Oswald killed John F. Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, exactly 25 years ago this week. In an anniversary spate of books and TV specials, the trendy

theory is that the Mafia arranged the President's murder and the silencing of Oswald by Dallas strip-joint owner Jack Ruby. This, of course, clashes with the Warren Commission's conclusion that Oswald acted alone for his own twisted reasons and that Ruby impetuously killed the assassin to spare Jacqueline Kennedy the ordeal of a Dallas trial of her husband's slayer.

As the excerpts from James Reston Jr.'s forthcoming book show, there are new twists on the lone-assassin conclusion as well. His contention that Oswald may have intended to kill Texas Governor John Connally rather than Kennedy was rather perfunctorily dismissed by the Warren Commission. Although Marina Oswald had testified to this belief, the commission's lawyers found her generally inconsistent and discounted much of what she said. The commission relied on Texas prosecutor Henry Wade for evaluation of the alleged conversation between Oswald and Ruby, overheard at Ruby's Carousel Club by Dallas lawyer Carroll Jarnagin. Wade found Jarnagin sincere in thinking he had heard Oswald offer to kill Connally so that gangsters could open up the state for their rackets, but he told the commission that the lawyer nonetheless had failed a lie-detector test on the subject.

Other theories persist: that Oswald, an avowed Marxist who had gone from service as a U.S. Marine to spend more than two years in the Soviet Union, re-

turned as a homicidal tool of the KGB; that when he tried to go back to the Soviet Union via Cuba in September 1963, Fidel Castro's embassy in Mexico City encouraged him to kill Kennedy. The reason: Castro knew that the CIA had plotted with Chicago mobster Sam Giancana and Hollywood boss John Roselli to kill him.

Support, of a sort, for the Castro-as-mastermind theory recently came from David W. Belin, a top counsel for the Warren Commission. In his new book, *Final Disclosure*, Belin says that "it is possible" Oswald was part of a Cuban conspiracy. It may have developed, Belin writes, when Oswald visited Mexico City.

But wait. For the Mafia-did-it advocates, the plot is much thicker. In their view, the man who rode a bus to Mexico City before the assassination, talking to travelers about his plans to meet Fidel Castro and then raising a ruckus at the Cuban embassy, probably was not Oswald. More likely, he was an impostor, dispatched by Mafia schemers so that when the real Oswald killed the President, a Cuban-Soviet connection would be readily assumed. The existence of someone posing as Oswald would, of course, be proof in itself of a conspiracy.

The possibility of an Oswald double is emphasized by the recent pin-it-on-the-Mob authors: John H. Davis (*Mafia Kingfish: Carlos Marcello and the Assassination of John F. Kennedy*) and David E.

## PLOT PLAYERS

Mobster Sam Giancana was executed gangland style after helping the CIA try to kill Fidel Castro. New Orleans Mafia boss Carlos Marcello swore vengeance after Robert Kennedy had him dumped in Guatemala. Jimmy Hoffa, with Bobby at 1959 hearings, feuded with him for years; Hoffa was slain in 1975. Castro warned in 1963 that any attempt to kill him might be reciprocated.





Scheim (*Contract on America: The Mafia Murder of President John F. Kennedy*). Earlier, G. Robert Blakey and Richard N. Billings suggested that underworld and anti-Castro schemers had joined to use Oswald as a handy fall guy (*The Plot to Kill the President*).

As evidence that someone was making sure that the real Oswald would be pinned to the crime of the century, Davis cites long-familiar sightings of "Oswald" in the Dallas area before the assassination: practice shooting at a rifle range, acting rude while buying ammunition, test-driving a car and claiming he would soon have "a lot of money" to buy it (Marina insists that he did not drive).

Scheim and Davis readily accept this Oswald as an impostor. But both conveniently tend to consider other alleged sightings of Oswald as genuine: sitting in a New Orleans bar with an associate of mobster Marcello's and taking money under the table; traveling with another Marcello crony three months before the assassination. In this selective reasoning, neither author seems to consider that some or all of the witnesses could be mistaken, their memories swayed by the TV images of the assassin's face.

Yet, as most of the books explain, the Mob had ample reason to want Kennedy out of the way. As early as 1957, he sat on the Senate Rackets Committee chaired by Arkansas' John McClellan; Robert Kennedy was its chief counsel. The Kennedys joined in the committee's stiff grilling of such gangsters as Los Angeles' Mickey Cohen, Louisiana's Marcello and Teamsters president Jimmy Hoffa, whose underworld ties presumably led to his murder in 1975.

After Robert Kennedy became Attorney General in 1961, the Justice Department waged a war against organized crime. Despite the foot dragging of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who had long claimed there was no Mafia, the Justice Department indicted 116 members of the

Mob. Bobby also undertook a personal vendetta against Hoffa, who was convicted of jury tampering and pension-fund fraud in separate trials in 1964.

Robert Kennedy's crusade against the lesser-known Marcello, whose Mob territory embraced Texas, was almost as intense. Born in Tunisia of Sicilian parents who moved to the U.S. in 1910, Marcello later used a phony Guatemalan birth registration to avoid deportation to Italy. Fully aware that Marcello was not a Guatemalan, Kennedy in 1961 nevertheless had Immigration agents hustle him aboard a 78-seat jet as its lone passenger and deposit him in Guatemala City. Marcello and his American lawyer were later flown to El Salvador, where soldiers dumped the two expensively dressed men in the mountains. Marcello claimed he fainted three times and broke several ribs before finding his way to a small airport. Slipping secretly back into New Orleans, he vowed revenge against the Kennedys.

**B**ut if the Mafia had a strong motive to kill the President, where are the connections to Oswald, the executioner, and Ruby, the silencer? They are almost too numerous to count, if you accept the claims of Scheim, a manager of computerized information at the National Institutes of Health. He seems to have amassed every reference ever printed about the J.F.K. assassination figures and mobsters, then woven these threads to fit a Mafia-hit theory.

Some of the connections are provocative. Take Oswald. His father Robert died of a heart attack in August 1939. Lee, born two months later, spent much of his first three years with Lillian and Charles Murret, his aunt and uncle, in New Orleans. In April 1963, while looking for a job in New Orleans, he stayed with the Murrets. Charles Murret was a bookmaker in a gambling operation run by Marcello, and for a few months Oswald allegedly collected bets for his uncle. Marcello and other

New Orleans gangsters thus may have been aware that the much publicized former Marine defector was in their midst.

That summer, when Oswald passed out leaflets for his one-man chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, his literature listed 544 Camp Street as the chapter office. That building housed the offices of Guy Banister, a private investigator and former FBI agent. Banister had been hired by Marcello to help him fight court battles. Working for Banister was David Ferrie, a former airline pilot who had publicly berated Kennedy for the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. In 1955 Ferrie headed a New Orleans squadron of the Civil Air Patrol. One of his cadets was Oswald. Some witnesses thought they saw the two together in Clinton, La., in September 1963.

On the two weekends before the Kennedy assassination, Ferrie huddled with Marcello at a farmhouse on the mobster's delta property. Ferrie later told the FBI that he was helping Marcello map strategy for a perjury and conspiracy trial then under way. (Marcello was acquitted on the day of the assassination.) On the night of the assassination Ferrie drove 350 miles through a rainstorm to Houston, arriving at about 4 a.m. He later insisted that this was a hunting trip, but he spent hours making calls from public phones at a skating rink.

To the conspiracy writers, all this meant that Marcello had been using Ferrie to help plot the killing of Kennedy. Ferrie's hasty trip, they imply, was to make sure, from telephones beyond Marcello's haunts, that Ruby killed Oswald.

As for Ruby, his gangster role is magnified by the recent books that go beyond the Warren Commission's portrayal of a strip-show proprietor and police buff. Some authors see him as a small-time hood in Chicago who worked his way up in what had been Al Capone's outfit. He was sent to Dallas in 1947, they say, with other Chicago gangsters to take over that city's rackets. Other reports had Ruby being exiled to Dallas by the Chicago Mob. Yet Marcello retained control of





## The Assassination

Dallas operations, working mainly through local boss Joseph Civello. The new books claim that Ruby was close to him and other Dallas gangsters active in prostitution, narcotics and slot machines.

Telephone records show that as the assassination date approached, Ruby made numerous calls to relatively high Mob figures in Chicago, New Orleans and Los Angeles, as well as to two associates of Jimmy Hoffa's. He later told the FBI that the calls were made to get union help in stopping other Dallas clubs from using amateur strippers. Yet the gangsters he called would not seem likely to trouble themselves with such petty problems.

However, if Oswald were merely a "patsy," as he claimed, it is difficult to understand why, after leaving the Texas School Book Depository building and picking up a revolver at his rooming house, he gunned down officer J.D. Tippit, who was about to question him. Six witnesses identified Oswald as Tippit's killer. Three watched him discard empty cartridges. The cartridges matched the gun he was carrying when police seized him in a theater.

Nor, despite the decades of sarcasm by earlier critics, has the basic evidence that Oswald killed Kennedy been shaken. Fragments of the bullets that hit Kennedy were matched with the rifle found on the sixth floor of the Depository. Oswald's fingerprints were on the rifle barrel. Fibers from the clothes he wore when arrested were caught on the rifle butt. That morning he had brought a long, thin package to work from the house in Irving where he spent weekends with Marina. He explained to the co-worker who gave him a ride that it contained curtain rods for his Dallas apartment, even though his flat had a full set.

One other problem for a conspiracy: Oswald got his job at the Depository on Oct. 15; the Secret Service did not decide on the motorcade route past this building until Nov. 14. It was not in Dallas newspapers until Nov. 19.

Most of the conspiracy writers contend that there was another gunman in Dealey Plaza, firing from a grassy knoll in front of the presidential motorcade. Numerous witnesses, including some officers, thought they heard shots from that direction. Still, as the House Assassinations Committee neared the completion of an exhaustive two-year reinvestigation of the Kennedy murder in December 1978, it approved a tentative conclusion that there had been no conspiracy.

But then Blakey, its chief counsel, found an acoustics expert who examined a police Dictabelt recording made of one of

the two radio channels used during the motorcade. After tests in Dealey Plaza, the scientist concluded that sounds on the belt came from an escorting motorcycle with its microphone stuck open, that four shots could be detected on the belt and that there was a fifty-fifty probability that one of them came from the knoll. Blakey called in two other experts, who raised the estimate to 95%. The committee then concluded that a conspiracy was "probable."

In 1982, however, the National Academy of Sciences examined the same recording. Its experts detected cross talk from the other police channel on the belt, chatter that it identified as occurring one

he had been stalking Oswald, why was he in a Western Union office wiring \$25 to one of his strippers, Karen Carlin, at 11:17 a.m. that Sunday? Not even the Dallas police knew when their interrogation of Oswald would end and when he would be transferred to custody of the county sheriff. In fact, a U.S. postal inspector had unexpectedly dropped in on the questioning and joined the quizzing. That held up the transfer by at least half an hour; without the delay, Ruby would have been too late. His televised shooting of Oswald occurred at 11:21 a.m.

The resourceful Warren Commission critics have a solution to that dilemma too. They note credible reports that Ruby visited police headquarters, where Oswald was being held, twice on the night of the assassination, even attending a press conference at which Oswald was exposed to photographers. Ruby sat at the back of the room, allegedly carrying his handgun. He was spotted in a crowd outside the building about 3 p.m. on Saturday, when the transfer originally had been scheduled. On Sunday morning, three TV technicians reported seeing him near their van overlooking the transfer ramp well before 11 a.m.

This pattern, these writers say, fits a stalking of Oswald. But why did Ruby go off to Western Union at a crucial moment? It was a prearranged plan to make the killing look spontaneous, they reply. Someone signaled Ruby when Oswald's move began. They imply that a cop did this; they do not say how.

Warren Commission critics point out that its members had never been told about the CIA's scheming with mobsters to assassinate

Castro, even though Castro had warned publicly on Sept. 7, 1963, that "U.S. leaders should think that if they are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe." Allen Dulles, a member of the commission who had been the CIA director when the plots were hatched, did not disclose this secret to the investigators. The CIA had told Robert Kennedy, but he too kept this information from the commission. Bobby's apparent acquiescence in the attempts to kill Castro may have added twinges of guilt to his deep grief over his brother's death.

Clearly, those plots were something the commission had every right to know about. If alerted to the CIA-Mafia entanglement, it might have worked even harder to close some of the investigatory gaps through which, 25 years later, the conspiracy advocates still rush with a welter of accusations, speculation and, so far, a dearth of conclusive evidence. ■

### THE SILENCER

Did Ruby, auditioning a stripper, use one of them as an alibi in the Oswald slaying?



minute after the shooting. "The acoustic analyses," the Academy experts reported, "do not demonstrate that there was a grassy-knoll shot." Moreover, three panels of independent experts examined the materials from Kennedy's autopsy. All concluded that he had been hit only by shots fired from behind him.

One conspiracy writer, David Lifton, offered a way out of these inconvenient findings: in his 1981 book, *Best Evidence*, he contended that conspirators had altered the President's body to conceal evidence of an entry wound from the front. Others note that Kennedy's brain has not been examined by anyone, except superficially by the autopsy doctors. Robert Kennedy did not turn it over to the National Archives with other autopsy evidence in 1966. He presumably did not want it preserved as a grisly artifact.

The timing of Ruby's assault on Oswald also fails to fit any tidy conspiracy. If



# A Shattering Afternoon in Dallas

BY HUGH SIDNEY

**A**ssassination was impossible. John Kennedy, with Jackie beside him in her raspberry pink suit, was too young, too exuberant to fall. The Secret Service, snooping beneath manhole covers, scanning for hostile eyes, was invincible. There would be no darkness on this bright day in Dallas.

How fragile our myths, how fleeting certainty.

Perhaps we knew when the first sound reached the press bus behind Kennedy's limousine. A distant crack, another. A pause, and another crack. Something was dangerously off-key.

Bob Pierpoint of CBS stood up, and our eyes met for ever so tiny an instant. We knew but did not want to believe. "What was that?" he asked. Doug Kiker, now of NBC, then a reporter for the New York *Herald Tribune*, was typing on his lap. He paused. Kennedy's limousine had turned the corner beneath a boxy, ugly building and sunk out of sight. The pigeons—the famous pigeons of death—were rising and swooping under the trees.

Pierpoint stood still for a couple more seconds, Kiker pecked a time or two. Three seconds, four. Then reality rushed with terrifying clarity down that short street beneath the Texas School Book Depository. We were never the same, nor was the world.

The story at the core was the stuff of everyday American violence. A killer and a city street and a wild ride to an emergency room and a young body too broken to repair. But it was Camelot and this was John Kennedy, and television now rushed in to make the dreadful event an epic.

Madness descended. Motorcycle cops jumped curbs, machines roaring over the grass in a ballet of aimless panic. The crowd on the grassy knoll looked like it had been swept with a giant scythe. The street was empty, a stark, lifeless slab of concrete that smelled of disaster. Kennedy's motorcade had been chopped in two like a luckless centipede, the front end blown to God knew where, the rear end writhing and thrashing.

The presidential limousine rested at Parkland Hospital. A grim young man was washing away the blood and flesh that had splattered the leather upholstery. The sight was shattering. The red roses given to Jackie were still in the car—crushed, broken. The young man in his neat dark suit, sleeves pushed up, swabbed the seats. They glistened in their miserable wetness. Beside the car was a bucket with brownish red water. If any doubt remained about this calamity, it was swept away in one glance at that bucket. So simple, so hideous.

The nurses' classroom at Parkland became a vortex of the world's clamor for information. Each word from that tiny point of a suburban hospital was flung across continents.

Two priests left the hospital, silent, sagging. Their duty was plainly over, whatever it had been. Asked if Kennedy was dead or alive, they remained silent for a few seconds. Then one of them blurted the terrible truth: "He's dead, all right." The four words



ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE, THE NEW GOVERNMENT FORMS

were carried back to the temporary pressroom, then exploded around the world.

The tragedy enlarged through the afternoon. First had come the awareness of the death of a man, a friend, a father and a husband. Then numbed nerves began to grapple with the fact that the Government too was brain-dead for the moment. There was the sense of a beast in convulsion at Parkland. Police rushed here and there. Vehicles circled, darted. A small coterie with Vice President Lyndon Johnson... No, try it again. A small coterie with President Lyndon Johnson dashed for Love

Field and Air Force One. A piece of lead weighing less than an ounce had blown away a single mind, and history had been halted in its tracks, pushed back a generation, then hesitantly restarted, but in a different direction.

Tragedy picks out its participants without regard for position or prestige. Press secretary Pierre Salinger was flying to Japan with a Cabinet delegation, so Malcolm Kilduff, his deputy, became the link between the trauma room at Parkland and the world beyond. On a torn fragment of paper, he crafted in a few short sentences the message that would sadden the globe. "President John F. Kennedy died..."

As newsmen shouted, Kilduff sought out an empty room with a friend. The scrap of paper with its devastating message quivered like a leaf in his fingers. He lighted a cigarette. Then something broke. "I saw that man's head," he sobbed. "I couldn't believe it. I nearly died. Oh, my God. Oh, my God."

At noon John Kennedy had grinned and waved back as the cheers cascaded down the Dallas streets. Two hours later what was left of him re-entered the public domain on the loading dock of Parkland Hospital. "I can't stand it," muttered one of the journalists watching. "Like dirty laundry out the back door." Jackie carried what dignity was left. Face stained, clothes marked with dried blood, eyes straight ahead, hand on the bronze casket as it was wheeled down the ramp. Several aides walked beside Jackie. The whole bright prospect of their new world shaped by their friend and leader had been vaporized in an instant by Oswald.

Jackie was helped into the white hearse to ride with Kennedy's body to Air Force One. Everything about the scene was small and colorless—casket salesman, disheveled reporters, unpainted concrete, exhaust fumes, arguing police and security men, traffic grinding by on a freeway.

The new Government formed in the fuselage of Air Force One, yet another ritual that mocked dignity. But it was, perhaps, that magnificent plane that began to reclaim the majesty of the presidency. With the body of Kennedy onboard, the new President invested formally, Colonel James Swindal taxied his plane out on the emptied runway of Love Field. The ship paused in lonely splendor, then lifted off into a blue sky, clean and beautiful even in that mournful flight.



# A Time for Heroes, Not Saints

PARTING THE WATERS: AMERICA IN THE KING YEARS 1954-1963

by Taylor Branch; Simon & Schuster; 1,064 pages; \$24.95

BY R.Z. SHEPPARD

In the summer of 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech to a crowd of 250,000 that had massed in Washington to support passage of civil rights legislation. It was a high moment. The Georgia preacher's cadences rolled over the Reflecting Pool like God's own truth; the Washington Monument loomed like Mount Sinai. As Mahalia Jackson chimed in, King concluded with the resounding hope that blacks and whites would join hands to sing, in the words of an old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last!"

Weeks later, this hope was fouled by smoke and flames. In Birmingham, the focus of a school-desegregation campaign, a bomb exploded in the basement of the 16th Street Baptist Church. Four young girls, readying themselves for the Sunday service, were killed.

Others had died in the struggle for civil rights. But after Birmingham, it became harder to sell a strategy of nonviolence. Blacks began to listen more seriously to Malcolm X and other eye-for-an-eye militants. By 1968, when King was assassinated in Memphis, where he had gone to support striking sanitation workers, the language and images of black power dominated the discourse of race relations.

Volume I of Taylor Branch's major accomplishment in biography as social history places King convincingly at the center of an American revolution. The son of M.L. King Sr., the formidable pastor of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, was no simple country preacher. His faith and oratory were rooted in the rural traditions of the black church, but his social conscience and tactics were molded by formal education and experience.

The nonviolent protest advocated by King proved highly effective in the newly expanded age of jet travel and television news coverage. Clips of black schoolchildren walking through barrages of jeers and spit brought home the snarling face of racism. The sight of orderly demonstrators enduring high-pressure hosings and the fangs of police dogs elicited sympathy and donations.

Branch, a journalist formerly on the

staffs of *Harper's* and *Esquire*, retrieves this receding past with all its drama and much of its detail. What may have once seemed a patchwork of events is given structure and coherence. The Montgomery bus boycott, the violence at the University of Mississippi, the murder of Medgar Evers and dozens of lesser-known incidents contributed to a gathering storm.

The personalities of the men and women who organized and led the Free-

tively against blatant segregationists like Birmingham public safety commissioner Bull Connor, but was less successful with powerful political foes in Washington. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover believed that the civil rights movement was Communist-inspired. The bureau had no proof, although some of King's associates had connections to the party.

It was while snooping for incriminating information that Hoover came up with evidence of King's lively extramarital sex life. It was a time for heroes, not saints. The director had similar information about President John F. Kennedy. Branch reinforces an already persuasive case that Hoover used his files to manipulate both men, as well as Attorney Gener-



FRANCIS MILLER—LIFE

## Excerpt

Knowing that he had wandered completely off his text, some of those behind him on the platform urged him on. . . Later, King said only that he forgot the rest of the speech and took up the first run of oratory that "came to me" . . . "I say to you today, my friends, and so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream."

dom Riders and lunch-counter sit-ins are drawn with clarity and perception. The battle cry "We shall overcome" often takes on subtle meanings that illustrate the complexities of courageous acts. For example, Rosa Parks, the woman who sparked the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott when she refused to give her seat to a white man, had to master her conflicts about respectability. "Having crossed the line that in polite society divided Negroes from niggers," writes Branch, "she had reason to expect not only stinging disgrace among her own people but the least civilized attentions of the whites."

As the South's most famous black clergyman, King had God on his side. The spiritual and moral alliance worked effec-

al Robert Kennedy, who needed to protect his brother from scandal.

The pastor and the President shared more important interests, but in the end their association was ill-fated. Branch reminds us that J.F.K.'s record on pushing civil rights legislation was not outstanding. Consequently, King found the Kennedy assassination something of a blessing. "I'm convinced," he told an interviewer, "that had he lived, there would have been continual delays." Ironically, Kennedy's death created a moral climate in which Lyndon Johnson was able to force a civil rights bill through Congress. The Lord, as King might have reflected, moves in mysterious ways, especially for the nonviolent.